

# Formerly Used Defense Sites

Some military activities have occurred on or near the refuge. This section contains a description of known Formerly Used Defense Sites (FUDS), known military activities and a discussion of potential contamination issues.

## Skilak Military Recreation Site

The Skilak Military Recreation site was located on the refuge 1/4 to 1/3 mile downstream of the outlet of Skilak Lake on the north side of the Kenai River (star indicates approximate location, Figure 5). This site was used by the military as a recreation area in the 1940s and was transferred to the USFWS in 1954. Prior to 1988, over 70 empty drums were removed from the site and several extremely rusted barrels still remain at this location. To date, this site has not been tested for contamination. Considering the area's history and the large number of barrels removed from this site, a contaminants investigation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers FUDS program may be warranted.

**Figure 5. Approximate Location of the Skilak Military Recreation Site.**



U.S. Geological Survey. Kenai (B-2) Quadrangle, Alaska-Kenai Peninsula Borough, 1:63 360 Series (Topographic).

## Naptowne Radio Relay Site

The 19.5-acre Naptowne Radio Relay Site is located on the north side of the Sterling Highway at milepost 78.1. The U.S. Air Force established this site in 1955 for a microwave radio relay station as part of the White Alice Communications System (WACS). The site contained a power and equipment building, steel tower, warehouse, sanitary latrine, fuel storage tanks, chain link fence and access road. Additionally, gravel removal occurred at the site. The Air Force had a special use permit issued by the USFWS for this site until September 1982. In November 1983, Alascom, Inc. took over the site from the Air Force, and Alascom was issued a special use permit by USFWS. Alascom is the current operator of this site.

Many WACS sites in Alaska are known to be contaminated. Because this was a WACS site, potential contamination issues could exist, especially if PCBs were used in conjunction with power generation. In December 1987 and January 1988, Alascom's contractor reported



finding no evidence of hazardous/toxic waste, ordnance or unsafe debris. It is unclear how detailed of an assessment occurred at this site, and a reevaluation of possible contaminants and sampling by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers FUDS program may be warranted.

### Turnagain Arm Firing Range

In 1955, the Department of the Army established the 47,864-acre Turnagain Arm Firing Range, which was to be utilized as an anti-aircraft artillery firing range. The site was located in Southcentral Alaska approximately six miles south of downtown Anchorage on both sides of the Turnagain Arm; 99% of this site was located on what is now the KNWR. However, in 1957 the Army decided not to develop the firing range, and all available information indicates the site was never used for its intended purpose.

According to Rick Johnston, a Ranger and Pilot for the refuge, in 1990 approximately 8 to 15 barrels were observed in an open meadow in Chickaloon Flats, south of Chickaloon Bay and West of Chickaloon River. These barrels were located within the proposed Turnagain Arm Firing Range. The exact location of the barrels was not recorded, and the barrels were never sighted again. Johnston thought the barrels probably belonged to the military.

### Wildwood Station

The Wildwood Station was an Army base located 3.5 miles north of the city of Kenai, approximately 3 miles west of the refuge boundary (Figure 6, arrow pointing toward Wildwood). It was constructed and used as a communications station by the Army in 1953. On December 31, 1965, this site was activated as Wildwood Air Force Station and was closed on July 1, 1972. The site comprised 5,300 acres, with military construction on 70 acres. The site included three aboveground fuel tanks, 12 underground fuel tanks, various structures and three abandoned landfills.

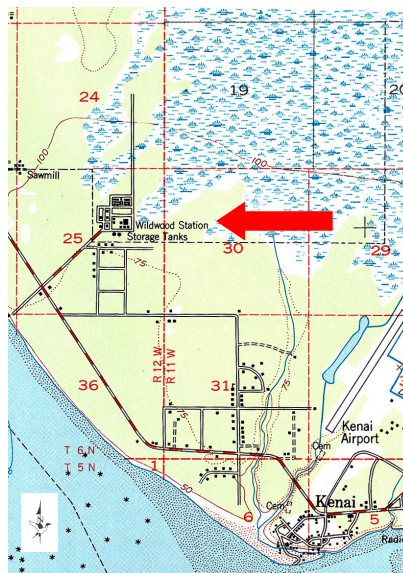
In the late 1980s, studies were initiated at Wildwood to determine potential contaminants and contaminated areas. The primary contaminants of concern were determined to be fuels and lead; however, other contaminants such as PCBs, dioxins, dichlorobenzenes, methoxychlor, endrin, BTX, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and chlordane were also discovered at the site. Since 1993, many cleanup actions have occurred. According to Jim Baker, Engineering Manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, no contamination is migrating toward the refuge (pers. comm.).

### Other Military Activities

Historically, the refuge was used for military maneuvers, but the full extent of past military maneuvers on the refuge is unknown. One such event is documented in the January-April, 1959 Refuge Narrative:

*Some two hundred men of the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry, from Fort Richardson, Alaska, conducted maneuvers on the Range March 26 and 27. From a point of helicopter landing on the*

**Figure 6. Approximate Location of Wildwood Station.**



U.S. Geological Survey. Kenai (C-4)  
Quadrangle, Alaska-Kenai Peninsula  
Borough, 1:63 360 Series (Topographic).



*Chickaloon River flats, ski troops traveled overland to Sterling via the Moose River. At Sterling, they joined other motorized troops in a sham attack on Wildwood Station, Kenai.*

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Additionally, several permits were issued for temporary military camps on the refuge. In 1953, the Seward Army Recreational Center maintained temporary camps on Hidden Lake and on Lower Russian River for periods during the summer. It is unclear how many of these temporary camps existed and what activities transpired at these camps; however, they likely were used just for recreation and thus pose little concern from a contaminant standpoint. There is no known evidence of contamination on the refuge resulting from these activities.

**Summary: Formerly Used  
Defense Sites**

Although some military activities have occurred on or near the refuge, it is unknown if any potential contamination issues exist. Based on current knowledge of military activities, it appears that the former Skilak Military Recreation Site and the Naptowne Radio Relay Site would be the most likely locations for potential residual contamination.